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RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1136  
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 002277

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR  
S/CRS  
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR LAC/CAR  
INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)  
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS OAS

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SUBJECT: HAITI'S LOCAL ELECTIONS ON TRACK FOR DECEMBER 3

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 2273

[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 2171

[1](#)C. PORT AU PRINCE 2105

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[1](#)1. Summary: The Provisional Electoral Council (CEP) and representatives of the UN mission to Haiti (Minustah) reported that elections preparations are in the final stages, with no unscheduled loose ends remaining. In preparation for post-electoral disputes, Director General of the CEP Jacques Bernard has dispatched 200 lawyers to the 140 communal electoral bureaus in order to absorb and process post-electoral complaints. Minustah and CEP representatives admitted there is potential for unrest among electoral workers who were not re-hired for the third round, but security plans are in place and those involved have confidence in the system that worked so well during rounds one and two. Both the Prime Minister and Bernard have publicly assured voters that everything is prepared for their December 3 participation. Following the elections, the GoH will need to determine both budgets and salaries for the new hires, as well as review the entire elections structure, which could cost as much as USD 183 million over the next five years, according to an estimate by representatives of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Haiti. End summary.

[1](#)2. CEP and Minustah have finalized all preparations for Haiti's local elections on December 3, according to reports presented at the final elections meeting November 24. The CEP announced that the 822 voting centers (which house the 9231 voting bureaus) are complete, with the exception of three in Martissant which will be moved to the outer boundaries of the southern neighborhood/slum of Port-au-Prince. The CEP has completed electoral lists (which have not changed since the first round in February of this year), ballots, tally sheets, and training of poll workers. The materials which have not already arrived at the voting centers, including sensitive and non-sensitive materials, will arrive at their final destination this week. Bernard has issued an emergency response system to respond to last minute issues that arise nation-wide during this final week before elections.

Post Electoral Contestations

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13. CEP Director General Jacques Bernard is concerned about the potential for disputes following the elections. Claude Parent (head of Elections Canada, which sent six electoral experts to assist at the CEP) agrees. "Haitians are poor losers," he said, "Bernard is right to expect that there will be numerous disputes after the results are released." With roughly 29,000 candidates and 9,000 positions to be filled, the potential for post-electoral contestations is significant. In preparation, Bernard hired 800 lawyers, 200 of whom will be based at the 140 communal electoral bureaus, to both advise and allay those contesting the results. Bernard estimates that the vote count will be complete five to seven days after the elections. However, he expects that contestations could keep the CEP from releasing final results until mid-January.

14. Note: Felix Ortega and Gaston Aid of the Organization of American States (OAS), told poloff that the number of disputes that would make it to a national level and slow down the vote count was quite small. They agreed that some voters may dispute the results on a municipal (communal) level, but did not think that the disputers would have the capacity -- including sufficient evidence and patience -- to take their contestations to a national level. End note.

#### Minor Protests by Former Electoral Workers

15. Minustah and the CEP reported a small number of protests by former poll workers and electoral guards whom the CEP did not re-hire for the third and final round of elections. In order to meet budget demands, the CEP re-hired only 3000 of 4000 electoral guards and a number of poll-workers were not re-hired for bureaucratic reasons. The two groups are prone to protest and could possibly cause unrest on election day.

#### Security Plans Prepared

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16. According to Neil Warriner, head of elections security at Minustah, the security procedures will be very similar to the one implemented during the past two rounds. Minustah has identified 112 "hot zones," which will have an increased number of security officers. As occurred during the first and second round of elections, the security team in one area can include any combination of the following: Minustah troops, UN police officers, Haitian National Police (HNP) officers and electoral security guards. Warriner reminded poloff that the cooperation between the UN officers and HNP has so far been strong on election days, even if this is not the case on an everyday basis.

#### Bernard and PM Alexis in the News

17. Prime Minister Jacques Edouard Alexis called on the Haitians to go to the polls on December 3 and both Bernard and Minustah have announced publicly that the December 3 elections are on schedule. As far as local campaigns, there has been very little information in the local news, although post notes campaign posters visible throughout Port-au-Prince. The primary themes for the elections are basic state responsibilities -- potable water, electricity, clean streets, timely government paychecks -- and lack of security, especially since the brutal murder of a young university student (ref A). Despite an increase in demonstrations in Port-au-Prince, only a few are elections-related, with most calling for the departure of Minustah and an increased GoH response to insecurity.

#### Post-Electoral Concerns

18. Felix Ortega of OAS said that the entire structure put in place by these local elections is very expensive: he estimates it will cost USD 26 million for FY07, which included only the cost of salaries and a very minimal operations budget. (Note: The FY07 budget includes

approximately USD 20 million for decentralization, some of which will go to local governance. However, this does not include the budget for salaries of local officials. End note.) Also, Ortega calculated that it will cost the GoH USD 183 million to hold all of the constitutionally required elections -- including local, municipal, departmental and national -- over the next five years, beginning with senate elections next year and ending with the presidential election in 2011.

19. Comment: After ten months, this elections season will finally come to a close, and with relative success. The GoH has fulfilled its promise to re-introduce local government into Haiti's political scene. Its next challenge is to support and fund local government, and to find a way to continue to carry out this promise in years to come.  
SANDERSON